



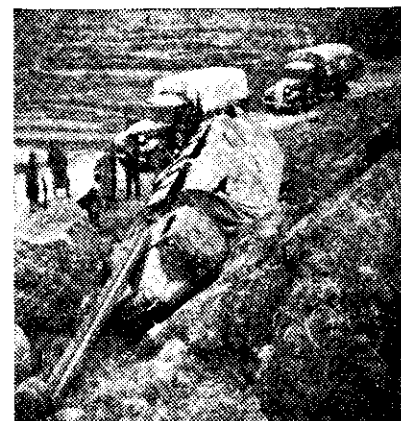
WILYM JENKINS
The uniform puzzles many people.

BBC TO CHUNGKING

Five Years With The Friends' Ambulance
Unit In Wayback China



A COMMON SIGHT: Picking up the wounded after a bombing raid on Chungking.



Above: A truck in the China Convoy that took the wrong turning.

Below: Chinese temples are frequently used by the Unit as hospitals, or store-houses (as here) for medical supplies.



"SOMEONE called while you were out," said the typist, "someone very handsome and exciting-looking. Is he a Pole?"

"No, indeed," said I, "he's just too awfully BBC."

"He didn't speak a bit like it," she insisted. "It was some foreign accent."

"Weish," I explained. "But Wilym Jenkins is a BBC singer, actor, and writer—when he's at home. Only he has been in China—wayback China—since the war started."

"Perhaps," she said doubtfully. "But that doesn't account for his uniform."

THE photographer, however, recognised the uniform at once. "You fellows were just as useful to us in Africa as the Army itself," he commented. "You kept right up with us and got your trucks to places where no one else seemed able to."

"That's because our men are all mechanics as well as medical hands," said Jenkins. "That goes for wherever our Units operate, from Finland or Yugoslavia to India or Abyssinia, and it makes for mobility. Any man in the Army," he explained to me while the shutter clicked, "can see at a glance that, despite the tropical khaki, I don't belong to any of the Armed Forces of any nation. You see where a rank badge would normally be, on my shoulder, there is a designation instead. But I've given up answering 'Friends' Ambulance Unit' to civilians who ask what F.A.U. on my shoulder means. I found they always replied either, 'O yes, French,' or else, 'Oh, I see, Friends of the Soviet Union.' Nowadays I just say 'Quaker Ambulance.'"

The China Convoy

"Were you ambulancing in China?" I asked.

"Not precisely," said Jenkins. "I went out to explore the prospects in 1939 and my most ticklish early job was going down into Indo-China after the Japanese had arrived and getting a cargo of medical supplies up to Free China under their noses. It nearly failed at the end because the Chinese had blown up the frontier bridge and I had to cut through the jungle to a place where we could build bamboo rafts and pole them over among the rapids. After that more volunteers and trucks arrived at the Chinese Government's invitation, and we started the regular Burma Road service. About half of our fellows are still on the transport system, while the other half do civilian or front-line medical work."

"But how can you convoy anything with the Burma Road closed?"

"Well, all we ever carried were medical supplies. (Our personnel on all of the dozen or so fronts where the F.A.U. operates, I must make clear, hold the traditional Quaker position regarding peace and war.) These supplies still come—not nearly enough, but still as much as we can handle—over 'the hump' by air. Then we run them north and east. Our north route goes 2,000 miles nearly to Outer Mongolia. Our east route winds around nearly as far to cover territory and avoid the Japanese and ends up just behind the Pacific Coast opposite the Philippines. We drop goods off as we go along to be picked up by local government or mission trucks—where there are any. In turn these pass them on, to travel by pack horses, or human backs, into the less

THEY ARE APPRECIATED—

BY CIVILIANS:

CHUNGKING, December 20, 1944.

"NOT a day passes without us reading about the heroism of some branch of the armed forces in action. Every day soldiers perform feats requiring exceptional gallantry and initiative far beyond the call of duty. But adequate praise, also, cannot be given to the members of the Friends' Ambulance Unit, who, behind and up to the firing lines, have been quietly undertaking all kinds of medical, relief, and transportation work. I take this opportunity again to record our indebtedness to their great assistance and full co-operation, which we find most valuable. We heartily endorse the Unit's project to obtain further reinforcements both in men and supplies in order to meet the constantly increasing demands on their services as a result of their past commendable achievements. All support, material and moral, rendered is justly deserved by the Unit and will be greatly appreciated by us."

(Signed) P. Z. KING,

Director-General, NATIONAL HEALTH ADMINISTRATION,
THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA.

BY SOLDIERS:

HERE is an extract from a commendation of the F.A.U. just received from the Headquarters of the American Detachment in the part of China where the Unit is serving:

"The American personnel serving with the . . . Division, . . . Chinese Expeditionary Force, desire to express their sincere appreciation and to acknowledge the respect and admiration they have for the members of the Friends' Ambulance Unit serving with the Division. The zeal and energy which they put into their work under extremely dangerous conditions, never complaining of their own hardships, won the whole-hearted respect of the Chinese and American personnel serving with them."

(Signed) WILLIAM M. HADSELL,
Major, Infantry, Commanding.

accessible places. So you can say the Convoy serves, 'wholesale' as it were, practically all Free China."

"Cannibal" Trucks

"But what fuel can you run your lorries on for these terrific distances?"

"Obviously not imported petrol. Actually, most burn charcoal. And we use some bean oil. But fortunately our northern run ends near the Kansu oil-field and we come back loaded up. Though, mind you, more than a third of the load is needed just to bring the rest back. Keeping the trucks patched up is the worst trouble. Since it is impossible to bring any more in, we have to do it by 'cannibalism.' Of the 41 trucks we started off with, 14 have disappeared into the remaining 27 as spare parts. Roads are something new to China, of course. Often they are cut along the sides of terrific mountains and always they are simply foundations without surfacing."

"But merely having kept our trucks screwed and wired together for six years means a lot to a country where transport always is the bottleneck. Even in peacetime, rice or oranges may be dirt cheap in one valley, while over the range just ten miles away—but ten miles straight up and straight down by footpaths only—you may find near-starvation. Again, just the mere example of our fellows' scrupulous attention to little knocks and noises in their trucks is doing a job in itself. It is teaching some Chinese how to look after machinery."

"An UNRRA Type of Work"

"You spoke of another half of your men. What do they do?"

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